

CONGRESSMAN **JESSE L. JACKSON JR.**
PROUDLY SERVING THE 2nd DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

For Immediate Release

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CONGRESSMAN JACKSON, CUMMINGS INTRODUCE BILL

TO ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITIES

LEGISLATION WOULD ENHANCE NIH EFFORTS TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE MINORITY HEALTH DISPARITIES

Washington, D.C. -- Congressmen Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL) and Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD) announced today the introduction of H.R. 2778, the Health Equity and Accountability Through Research Act of 2009. The bill elevates the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) to the level of an Institute.

Jackson and Cummings said "the bill provides the structure and authority to better address the deep and persistent health disparities that plague our nation's minority populations. The NIH now will have even stronger architecture and tools to help build healthier and stronger communities throughout the country."

In 2000, the NCMHD was created to promote minority health and coordinate the efforts of the NIH to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities. While making important strides, however, the NCMHD's current structure generates ambiguities as responsibility and authority for minority health disparities research remain diffuse and spread throughout NIH.

In addition, the NCMHD lacks authority over all NIH-supported health disparities activities and funds.

To address these concerns, H.R. 2778 elevates the NCMHD, establishing the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The bill clarifies the role of the Institute's Director as coordinator and manager of the NIH-wide minority health and health disparities portfolio.

It also provides the new Institute with professional judgment over NIH-wide minority health and health disparities budgets as well as management over NIH-wide minority health and health disparities funding.

Congressman Jackson said, "I was pleased to lead the effort in the House to create the NCMHD ten year ago. Now is the time to continue the momentum, take the next step and turn the NCMHD into an Institute. With greater authority and influence, this new Institute will better concentrate and drive our efforts to reduce and eliminate health disparities."

"Whether African American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian and Pacific Islander, the minority populations in our country are more severely affected by diseases than our white counterparts across the board," Congressman Cummings said. "Congressman Jackson and I are confident that elevating the NCMHD to the Institute level and providing its Director with clear authority over health disparity issues will empower NIH to better address the disparities that are killing our communities."

According to recent statistics:

- African Americans have death rates more than 40 percent higher than Whites for heart disease, seven times higher for HIV/AIDS, double for prostate cancer, and 30 percent higher for all cancers.

- Hispanics have death rates 41 percent higher than Whites for diabetes, three times higher for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, three times higher for HIV/AIDS and 18 percent higher for strokes.

- Native Americans and Alaskan Natives have death rates 750 percent higher than Whites for tuberculosis, 190 percent higher for diabetes, and 550 percent higher from alcoholism.

The language of H.R. 2778 also is included in the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2009, which was announced by the Tri-Caucus yesterday.

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